

FW: Comments for ZBA 10/20: Hancock Village

From: Polly Selkoe Tue 10/21/2014 8:46 AM

To: Maria Morelli <mmorelli@brooklinema.gov>;

**From:** jske514@aol.com [mailto:jske514@aol.com]

**Sent:** Monday, October 20, 2014 5:31 PM

**To:** Polly Selkoe

**Subject:** Comments for ZBA 10/20: Hancock Village

Polly,

Please distribute the following comments to the ZBA.

Thank you.

Janice Kahn

Dear Members of the ZBA:

I am submitting these comments with regard to the redevelopment of Hancock Village, and particularly the immense 5-story building that is being proposed at the interior of the site.

I know that others have addressed the most obvious problems with this redevelopment: Negative impacts on the environment (the greenbelt, drainage and flooding), increasing fiscal strains on the Town, the negative school impact (with a 38% increase in the number of bedrooms), historic preservation concerns, design elements incongruous both within the site and within the larger neighborhood, and safety/traffic problems (including fire safety, pedestrian safety) and the impact of blasting.

It is that last problem that I would like to address. In the over 30 years that I have lived on Craftsland Road (in Chestnut Hill, just behind Route 9), two malls and a 40B project in Newton on the Brookline border have been constructed.

Development #1: The Atrium Mall. When there was blasting for the Atrium Mall, my neighborhood experienced health and safety issues. The blasting disturbed nests of rats that were living under the ground in the spaces between the rocks. Rats came up into our streets and caused damage to our homes; rats also found their way into the sewer system and I personally found a rat coming up through my toilet. The Town had to poison the rats by putting poison in the sewer system - and then we saw disoriented rats during the day wandering the streets. This was a serious health concern.

But I experienced as well another problem with the blasting. I had just finished putting an addition onto the back of my house. The blasting caused a greater-than-expected settling of the addition, creating cracks in my new walls and causing my addition to have to be lifted up. None of the doors on the addition ever sat correctly in the door frames after the blasting. I live more than 1/4 mile from the site and still had these impacts. As my long-time neighbors are selling

their homes, inspections are revealing structural damage which may well have been caused by the blasting.

Development #2: Avalon Bay (a 40B project). This was a project that was overbuilt on the site. It was designed with lots of paved areas, and little greenery to hold water on the site. As a result, when there are heavy downpours, the driveways act as conduits for the water, which runs off-site and into the homes at the end of Belmont Road (in Brookline!). This development also only has one access and egress point that tenants can use, and that point is off of an off-ramp. I feel this is a very dangerous condition for the residents, if there should be a fire.

Development #3: When there was blasting for the latest development, Chestnut Hill Square, I had a conversation with the engineer in charge of the site. He told me that the fault lines run south and so any blasting in Newton would of course travel into Brookline - he was not surprised when I told him of my experience. The reality is that the homes in the area are largely built on ledge or puddingstone and are very vulnerable to the impacts of blasting.

All three experiences are I believe relevant considerations for the current Chestnut Hill Realty proposal: (1) Need for blasting through ledge and/or puddingstone; (2) massive, out of scale building; (3) drainage issues; and (4) one access point. I am very concerned that the 5-story building is much too massive, contains too many units, and has only one access and egress, should there need to be an evacuation. The blasting may well cause problems for the existing units to the south of that building and to the neighbors of homes in the surrounding area.

I urge the ZBA to place conditions on this proposal that limit the size and massing of the single building and require a traffic circulation plan that meets both fire safety codes and pays attention to resident safety more generally. This proposed building has no obvious relationship to its context within Hancock Village itself, within the South Brookline neighborhood, and within the Town of Brookline. Buildings of this scale and density are not appropriate for this residential setting.

Respectfully,

Janice Kahn  
TMM15  
Chair, Public Safety Subcommittee, Advisory Committee  
Town of Brookline